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FOR EUR/SE MCLEGG-TRIPP AND EMELLINGER

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TAGS: [GTIP](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CY](#) [GR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: ARCHBISHOPRIC INTERESTED IN ANTI-TIP COOPERATION;
HOPING TO START OVER WITH MUFTI

REF: 06 NICOSIA 2055

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald L. Schlicher for Reason 1.5 (b).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Following up on the Ambassador's December 20 offer to Archbishop Chrysostomos II (Reftel) to cooperate with the Church on combating trafficking in persons (TIP), PolOff met January 22 with the Church's pointman on the issue, Bishop Vasilios. While aware of the country's sexual exploitation problem, Vasilios expressed shock at the GOC's lack of sufficient progress on the "Three P's": prevention, protection, and prosecution. He promised to study the matter in detail and seek ways for the Church to engage on TIP. Turning to the subject of relations between the island's Muslims and Christians, Vasilios regretted the failed January 7 attempt to bring together Chrysostomos and Turkish Cypriot religious leader Mufti Ahmet Yonluer. The Archbishop's public missteps were as much to blame for the aborted get-together as the north's "Deep State" pressure on the Mufti. END SUMMARY.

TIP: "An Ethical Challenge"

¶2. (SBU) In his December 20 meeting with newly-installed Archbishop Chrysostomos II (Reftel), the Ambassador highlighted the Embassy's interest in improving its anti-TIP cooperation with the Church. The Archbishop responded positively, expressing interest in taking a more active role to combat trafficking. On January 22, PolOff followed up by providing a more in-depth briefing on Cyprus's trafficking problem to Bishop Vasilios, who is responsible for the Church's "social program" and its de-facto pointman on TIP issues.

¶3. (C) The bishop was generally familiar with Cyprus's sexual exploitation problem, although his knowledge seemed based primarily on anecdotes (e.g., Cypriot wives complaining that the Church annuls marriages so foreign "artistes" can steal their husbands). When faced with the hard figures of trafficked women -- the debts they incur upon arrival, for example, and the payment of finders' fees for their recruitment -- he angrily asked, "What is the Government (of Cyprus) doing to solve this problem?" Poloff highlighted Cyprus's Tier II Watch List status (the worst of any EU member state) and noted that the ranking was due to the GOC's poor record in implementing its own national action plan to address the "Three P's." Although prosecution/conviction figures for 2006 were a bright spot, and although there are recent signs of Presidential interest in implementing the national plan, the GOC's prevention and protection efforts to

date were clearly inadequate.

¶4. (C) Visibly shocked by this information, the bishop called TIP "an ethical challenge" in which "the Church has a role." Vasilios repeatedly asked what the Church could do, and seemed receptive to the idea of using the ecclesiastical bully pulpit to spark public awareness and question (privately, if not publicly) official inaction. Vasilios specifically requested more information about which GOC ministry took the lead on TIP, and promised to raise "immediately" with the Archbishop his (unspecified) ideas for action.

(Not) Meeting the Mufti: "The Archbishop is Not a Diplomat."

¶5. (C) Turning to the meeting between the Archbishop and Mufti Yonluer that was to have taken place earlier this month (Reftel), Vasilios said the potentially historic meeting had been called off on January 7 at Yonluer's request -- even though the Turkish Cypriot had committed to the idea in December. The invitation remained on the table should Yonluer change his mind, the bishop claimed, adding that he had communicated twice with Yonluer on Chrysostomos's behalf since the cancellation of the meeting. Meanwhile, Vasilios was planning to join the Bishops of Morphou and Kykko in an upcoming visit to Yonluer in the north.

¶6. (C) Although Yonluer had publicly cited the Archbishop's January 6 "inflammatory" comments about the desecration of Orthodox churches in the north, Vasilios claimed that Yonluer had subsequently revealed ("in full confidence") that this was not the real reason. Instead, the bishop said that "outside forces" had been pressuring Yonluer to cancel his

call on Chrysostomos -- and the Archbishop's comments provided the nervous Imam with an easy way out. According to Vasilios, Yonluer received a scathing letter from former "TRNC President" Rauf Denktash shortly after the December 27 announcement of his plans to meet the Archbishop. Denktash had accused Yonluer of overstepping his religious prerogatives, Vasilios said, and soon thereafter Yonluer began to receive warnings from unnamed Turkish military figures on the island and numerous anonymous threats. Evincing clear pride at the close rapport he claims to have established with a Turkish Cypriot official, the bishop explained that Yonluer would have found any excuse to get out of the meeting.

¶7. (C) Nonetheless, the Archbishop had made a mistake with his remarks, Vasilios conceded; he never should have divulged publicly the talking points he hoped to cover with the Mufti in private. "The Archbishop is not a diplomat," Vasilios suggested. Disappointed that this opportunity for interfaith island dialogue had disappeared for the moment, he hoped his own meeting with the Mufti might patch things up somewhat. Further, he was contemplating a renewed effort to bring the men together, and would propose the idea soon to Chrysostomos.

Comment

¶8. (C) In his first meeting with us, the Archbishop promised a lot on topics ranging from TIP to bicomunal relations. His performance so far, however, has fallen short of the mark -- especially with regard to nurturing contacts with the Turkish Cypriots. But the candor and engagement of his advisor Vasilios is somewhat reassuring. Even if Vasilios cannot deliver peace and harmony with the Mufti, he may prove a valuable ally in the fight against TIP -- especially if he can energize the Archbishop and convince him to bring the Church's considerable moral weight (and financial resources) to bear on the issue. END COMMENT.
SCHLICHER